

Committee on Veterans' Affairs – Testimony by Steve Kennedy, IAVA-CT

Written Testimony Concerning Proposed Senate Bills 951, 952, and 968

Distinguished members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, my name is Stephen Kennedy, and I am an Iraq war veteran and the leader of IAVA-CT, which is the Connecticut chapter of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA). I write today concerning several bills before the Committee.

Regarding S.B. 951, An Act Concerning Veteran Enrollment in Certain Alternate Route to Certification Programs, and S.B. 968, An Act Establishing a Military to Machinists Job Training Program for Veterans: The transition from the military can be exceptionally challenging, as veterans leave jobs where they have strong social support from close peers and clearly-defined roles for civilian roles not necessarily connected to their previous experiences. Connecticut is always looking for well-qualified individuals to take on challenging positions in schools, and CT's advanced manufacturers like Electric Boat and Sikorsky have recently reported many open positions but a lack of properly-trained employees to fill them. Veterans have a demonstrated commitment to service and incredibly valuable skills and experiences. With some veterans struggling to find work that would assist in their transition and allow them to build their lives here in Connecticut, any program that could facilitate veteran reentry can be incredibly valuable. We are in strong support of S.B. 951, and we support S.B. 968, assuming appropriate funding to ensure that essential, currently available DOL veterans training programs remain in place.

Regarding S.B. 952, An Act Concerning the Development of a Training Manual and Training Program on Certain Health Conditions Common to Veterans: We support efforts to

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educate employers and other entities on veteran-specific issues that could impact their employment. Given the severe budget cuts that the DVA has faced over the last decade and the incredibly valuable services that they provide, we would be concerned about a mandate for the DVA to conduct a study or write new guidelines without additional funding and staffing. However, there are many government agencies and non-profit organizations that have valuable insights and roots in the veterans' community that could provide important feedback and take the burden off of the DVA. Rather than mandating a the DVA to conduct this work, we suggest the formation of a working group composed of key stakeholders from the state government, veterans' service organizations, and employers, to investigate this matter and make recommendations. We would be happy to provide assistance in this effort, and we believe the intent of the bill is important for the full reintegration of veterans within the state.